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Budget Survey 2002

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**Representative
Joe McDermott**

Budget Survey 2002

Happy New Year!

I want to welcome State Representative Toni Lysen to the Legislature. She joins me in representing the 34th District now that Erik Poulsen has moved from the House to the Senate. I met Toni over a decade ago, and look forward to working with her on your behalf this year.

The short 2002 legislative session has just begun, but we already face hard choices on cutting state spending, improving schools, and finding new revenue to fix the Alaskan Way Viaduct and solve other transportation needs.

I'd like to hear from you before I make final decisions on these and other key issues. You can help by answering the enclosed survey and returning it as quickly as possible. I figure not everyone will take the time to respond, making the replies I do get that much more important. You can be sure I'll read your answers with the careful attention they deserve.

There's much to do during the short 60-day legislative session, but remember that I am never too busy to listen to you or serve you. You can always reach me quickly through the Hotline (1-800-562-6000) or my other phone numbers and addresses.

Wishing you all the best,

Joe McDermott



How to reach me:

E-mail: mcdermot_jo@leg.wa.gov

Toll-free hotline: 1-800-562-6000

Hearing-impaired hotline:
1-800-635-9993

Office phone: 1-360-786-7952

Regular mail:

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Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Representative
Joe McDermott

34th District

Budget Troubles



No one could imagine how different the national economy would be after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Our state has been hit especially hard by huge Boeing layoffs and the downturn in the high-tech economy. At the same time, health care, prison, and education costs are soaring.

The result is a budget shortfall of about \$1.25 billion, largely because state revenues are not coming in at the rate expected just a year ago. To put this in scale, the two year budget the Legislature passed last session was for \$22 billion. Governor Locke, my legislative colleagues, and I agree that increasing general sales, property, or business taxes to solve this shortfall is not prudent in these times. Some user fees and gambling taxes may increase, but the main solution must be to reduce spending. Gov. Locke has already proposed to abolish 30 state programs and 440 state jobs, while making heavy cuts everywhere except in K-12 education. His proposals include:

- Saving \$117 million by reducing pension contributions, delaying promised cost-of-living increases and requiring state employees to pay yet more for health insurance
- Cutting \$235 million from state human services, including reduced payments to nursing homes, pharmacists, and SSI recipients
- Cutting \$54 million from higher education, while giving the UW and other colleges more flexibility to raise tuition
- Ending \$72 million of temporary state assistance to local governments that were hurt by I-695 (the car-tab tax repeal)
- Raising about \$100 million by increasing gambling taxes and joining "The Big Game" multi-state lottery



As you can see, we face some very tough choices ahead. I won't make final decisions until I learn more about how local families would be affected by budget-cutting alternatives.

Transportation

It's time for the Legislature to stop talking about transportation and fix the problems. Local commuters already lose an average of \$930 and 53 hours a year sitting in traffic. Now we're losing good jobs because businesses do not want to locate or expand in areas choked by gridlock.

We cannot afford more delay. We must face the facts: No matter how much we improve spending efficiency, we can't fix the Alaskan Way Viaduct or our other transportation problems without new revenues.

Gov. Locke has proposed a funding solution that would raise gas taxes by 9 cents per gallon over three years (they haven't been raised in a decade), and increase fees on trucks and newly purchased cars. Legislators are looking over the Governor's plan, but chances are it – or something like it - will be submitted to a public vote.



We're also looking at the possibility of allowing counties to keep more of the gas tax dollars collected locally. Given our awful traffic problems, can we in King County continue to afford shipping our gas-tax dollars to other parts of the state? I'd like to hear what you think.

Questionnaire

Please fill out the tear-off questionnaire, add a stamp, and get it back to me right away. Instead of asking confining "yes or no" questions, I'd like to hear your thoughts and priorities. I'd also like to hear in your own words how you feel about various proposals. Please use the answer spaces to tell me what you really think of the possibilities.

If you have other thoughts or suggestions you'd like to add, feel free to send them along with the questionnaire in an envelope. I always appreciate hearing from you.

Please tear off the survey panel with your answers, add a stamp, and mail it to me. While you may remain anonymous, if you'd like more information on a specific topic I'll gladly respond if you tell me how to contact you.



34th District Questionnaire

The Legislature must prioritize spending to address the \$1.25 billion revenue shortfall. Please tell me your priorities by ranking the following from 1 to 6 in order of importance, with "1" being the most important:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| _____ Education | _____ Environment |
| _____ Higher education | _____ Social and health services |
| _____ Public safety | _____ Transportation |

Please rank the following human services from 1 to 6 in terms of their importance to our state, with "1" being the most important.

- | | |
|---|---|
| _____ Long-term care for seniors and people with disabilities | _____ Children's health care |
| _____ Drug and alcohol treatment | _____ Adult health care |
| _____ Foster care | _____ Aid to families with dependent children |
| _____ Other? _____ | |

How do you feel about Gov. Locke's proposal to raise gas taxes by 9 cents over three years?

Legislators are debating whether to pass a transportation plan and gas-tax increase, or send a plan to the ballot for a public vote. What's your position?

Getting Washington into the multi-state "Big Game" lottery would raise about \$25 million in revenues. But some say encouraging gambling is a bad idea. What do you think?

Do you have any ideas for cutting the state budget?

Name: _____	I'd like more information on:
Address: _____	
Phone: _____	
Email: _____	